

Battle Creek Takasaki Exchange



INTERESTED IN TRAVELING TO JAPAN?

- Visit **Takasaki**, Japan, Battle Creek's Sister City since 1981. This is a unique opportunity to visit a mid-region Japanese City *not often seen by tourists*.
- **Represent** Battle Creek at a prestigious ceremony with Takasaki's Mayor.
- Enjoy the **world famous** Japanese **fireworks** show at the Takasaki Summer Festival
- Sister City exchanges such as this one encourage broader understanding of the world beyond our borders. Students develop an **appreciation** of cultural differences.
- **Travel** with a group of students and a chaperone from Battle Creek. Stay for 10 days with a host family in Japan. Learn how Japanese live day to day.
- **Host** a Japanese guest in your home for 10 days following your Japan adventure. Hosting completes the exchange experience.

AMBASSADOR EXCHANGE

Serving as a High School Ambassador to Takasaki is an exciting opportunity available to any student in the Battle Creek area. The exchange program includes a 10-day travel experience here in Battle Creek (20 days total). Battle

Creek's delegation consists of four high school students and a teacher/chaperone. Every effort is made to send students representing the public and private school districts in our community; however, the strength of the individual student is the most important factor in selecting an ambassador. Family commitment and ability to be involved in hosting experiences are also important. Students and families interested in participating are encouraged to contact us for more information (see information below).

About the BCAIRC

The Student Ambassador Exchange program is a volunteer exchange sponsored and organized by the Battle Creek Area International Relations Committee (BCAIRC), which is appointed by the City Commission. Other student exchange programs include the Junior High Ambassador Exchange.

Contact:
Jennifer Rosa, BCAIRC member
p(269)966-3377 email: jrosa@battlecreekmi.gov

DECIDING TO APPLY

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

When does the Exchange take place and how long does it take?

The exact dates vary each year, but typically includes the last week of July and the first week of August. The schedule allows students to attend the Takasaki Summer Festival, a day-long festival featuring ceremonies, a parade, and ending with a fireworks display. Do consider that the hosting week often conflicts with band camp and sports camps so be sure to confirm your availability before applying.

How much does it cost?

It varies from student to student, but a general budget would be \$1,200. This estimate includes a required \$800 contribution towards airfare and the balance for other expenses described below. The Battle Creek Area International Relations Committee covers the cost of airfare over \$800 (tickets vary from \$2,100 to \$2,400). The City of Takasaki arranges for transportation to and from Narita Airport (Tokyo) and various site seeing trips. Most expenses in Japan are covered, however students should plan to take money for optional activities they may choose to do with their hosts. Other expenses to expect include a passport application fee, luggage or travel gear, pocket money for souvenirs and the two travel days, inexpensive gifts for the host family, as well as optional activity expenses in Japan or when hosting in Battle Creek. Individuals have control over many of these expenses. Students stay with a host family and there are no lodging or food expenses in Japan; in return families host a student and cover food and basic expenses for their guest. The BCAIRC works hard to keep the program affordable. We are happy to answer any questions on this topic prior to or during an interview.

Are there other, nonfinancial obligations?

Prior to leaving, students must attend orientation sessions that will prepare them to be good guests in a Japanese home and to represent our community in the best manner. While in Japan, students must participate in all exchange activities. Families must participate in hosting activities when the delegation returns. Each year, BCAIRC volunteers work with you and the other participants as a group to create a convenient, shared hosting schedule. As part of the preparation, the delegation works together to design a performance, usually a song or dance, that will be performed for the Mayor of Takasaki in Japan. The performance should represent our culture and be understood by a non-English speaking audience.

Will my Japanese family speak English?

Japanese is the primary language in Japan. English may be spoken by some professionals, but typically it is students in the home who are the translators for our students who are visiting. Takasaki families decide whether they want to host a Battle Creek student with the knowledge that their guest will not speak Japanese. This means the student that will host you has some confidence in their language skills. Learning to communicate through language barriers is part of the benefit of the program. Students must be willing and able to handle this challenge in a flexible, gracious and pleasing manner. Most days, the delegation spends time together with representatives from the Takasaki International Relations Department. The department includes Japanese staff fluent in English and a native English speaker who speaks Japanese. Group activities always include an adult who speaks English fluently. A Battle Creek chaperone is available to assist with communication needs, especially emergencies.

What will I eat?

The Japanese diet is very different from the American diet. Staying in a Japanese home will expose you to different foods and traditions. Miso soup, fish (cooked and raw) and rice are often daily staples. So are vegetables (tempura) and fruits. Students often return home having tasted eel, octopus and other seafood not common to Battle Creek menus. Students are not expected to like everything, but must be open to new cuisine and able to accept and appreciate foods of another culture in a polite and gracious manner.

Selection Process

Step One: Send complete application along with three recommendations by **April 18th** to:

Jennifer Rosa

Battle Creek Area International Relations Committee

c/o City Manager's Office

PO Box 1717, Battle Creek, MI 49016

Step Two: Applications are reviewed. Selected students are invited to interview with BCAIRC volunteers.

Step Three: Following interviews, a delegation is composed and students are notified by phone and by mail.

Step Four: Orientation meetings are scheduled with families.

JUST FOR PARENTS

YOUR CHILD WANTS TO GO TO JAPAN, WHAT NOW?

Dear Parents,

Each year we meet dozens of excited high school students and their supportive, but sometimes bewildered, parents. By the time we meet, the student has filled out the application, found references and been selected for an interview that will determine if they are one of the lucky four selected to represent their City on a trip to Takasaki, Japan. In short, the student is ready to pack their bags and the parents are still wondering what the program really means.

We hope we have answered some common questions elsewhere in this application. This letter is intended to raise a few key points, especially for parents, early in the process. Please review this and consider your own commitment to this opportunity. Your student is excited and believes they can do anything (they probably can). We know that you are a big part of that success and this program is no exception. The Takasaki Exchange Program requires family involvement and parental commitment.

So, after talking with parents from past delegations, here are a few things those parents want you to know:

- ⇒ Plan for at least one parent to take time off work during the hosting period. Hosting is fun. It is exciting. It is an obligation. It doesn't fit in after work or on the weekends. If you both have to work a day or two, that may be OK. If your work requires more than that and there isn't another adult family member who can commit full-time to the hosting responsibility, reconsider applying.
- ⇒ Plan to spend time at the pre-departure orientation sessions. You'll be expected to attend a few planning meetings and to learn about Japanese culture as you prepare for your guest. We try to keep these fun and convenient.
- ⇒ Plan to coordinate activities with the other host families. Other adults can help car pool, host barbecues and give you a break. We'll work with you as a group to customize the hosting plans. You'll be busiest the days just before your student leaves for Japan and again during the 10-day hosting period.
- ⇒ Hosting and gift costs should be budgeted. We work hard to keep expenses discretionary and low. However time and again we heard parents say they wanted to do more with their guests than they planned. Sorry we can't tell you how much you'll spend, but if you are concerned about your ability to cover costs, talk to us early and often, and we can help you plan.
- ⇒ Don't plan to vacation or send your child to camp immediately before or after the exchange. The exchange is constant activity for three weeks and can be demanding physically and emotionally. Plan time for your student and family to rest.
- ⇒ Plan to see your child grow and mature. Parents often remark at how much maturity and confidence they see in their child after participating in the Takasaki experience. They may also talk about wanting to go again to Japan or other parts of the world. This is natural. There are many programs in high school and college that allow for study or travel abroad experiences. Youth for Understanding (www.YFU-USA.org) and People to People (www.ptpi.org) are two of the largest.

You don't have to decide now, but if you have any questions or concerns about your family's ability to participate, ask us lots of questions early on in the process.

-- Thanks, Jennifer Rosa

STUDENT APPLICATION FORM

For administrative use only

Exchange year: _____

Any **high school or middle school** student who lives in Battle Creek or an adjacent township may apply. Students entering sixth or ninth grade in the fall are also eligible and encouraged to apply. After application review, selected candidates will be invited for an interview before the final delegation of four students is announced. Applications should be mailed to: Jennifer Rosa, c/o City Manager's Office, PO Box 1717, Battle Creek, MI 49016.

Contact Information:

Your name: _____

Your email address: _____

Your cell phone: _____

Parents' names:

Mom's Name: _____ work/day phone number: _____

Mom's email address: _____ Mom's cell phone: _____

Dad's Name _____ work/day phone number: _____

Dad's email address: _____ Dad's cell phone: _____

If your parents are separated or divorced, please include the names and phone number of ALL adults who will be actively involved in hosting.

School _____ Grade you'll enter next fall _____

ON A SEPARATE PIECE OF PAPER BRIEFLY ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:

1. Write a description of yourself including such information as talents, interests, work experience, general health, and any previous traveling experience. (Please type if possible.)
2. Please list all of your current extracurricular activities.
3. What sparked your interest to apply for this exchange?
4. What would you like to learn from your homestay in Takasaki, Japan?
5. Describe a situation in which you were frustrated by a friend, teammate or classmate who you could not avoid spending time with and how you handled yourself.
6. Describe briefly the members of your immediate family, such as their occupations, interests, etc.

Three **personal recommendations** are required from adults who know you well. See attached form. Only one recommendation may be from a teacher. None may be from a relative. These recommendations should be sealed in a separate envelope and returned along with your application.

APPLICATION CHECKLIST



Application Checklist

- _____ Application Form
- _____ Delegate Profile (two pages plus photos)
- _____ THREE adult recommendations

Send complete application packet to:

Jennifer Rosa
Battle Creek Area International Relations Committee
c/o City Manager's Office
PO Box 1717, Battle Creek, MI 49016
DUE DATE: April 18, 2016

Or hand deliver to City Hall, Suite 206
Call 269-966-3406 or email
jrosa@battlecreekmi.gov for assistance.



DELEGATE PROFILE

This information will be used to match you with your host family. This form will then be given to your host family. Therefore please write detailed responses. *(Use additional sheet of paper if needed.)*

Provide your legal name as it appears on your passport or birth certificate.

Male

Female

First Name _____ Middle Name _____ Last Name _____

Home address (street/city/zip) _____

Email address: _____

Birthday: _____ Age: _____ Your height in centimeters _____ Your weight in kilograms _____

Your shoe size: _____

Your hobbies/interests: Reading books Computer/video games Watching TV Movies Music
 Anime/Manga Crafts Clubs Community Service Other: _____
 Play musical instrument? _____ Play sports: _____

What other club or extra-curricular activity do you participate in (either school or non-school related):

What time do you typically wake up? _____ Go to sleep? _____

List the members of your household, including siblings names and ages:

Your health

Allergies (Please check all that apply to you):

☐ Food What foods? _____

☐ Animals Which animals? _____ If pets stay outside, will your allergies be OK? Yes No

☐ Smoke If someone in your host family smokes but not in front of you, will your allergies be OK? Yes No
(Smoking is much more prevalent in Japan than in the U.S., and it is highly likely that someone in the homestay family will smoke. If this would be a severe problem for you, please make note of this below. Please keep in mind, however, that because smoking is so prevalent in Japan, it will be very difficult to find a non-smoking host families.)

☐ Other Please describe _____ Additional comments about allergies _____

Are you under a doctor's care (which would impact you while in Japan?) Yes No

If yes, explain: _____

Are you taking any medications? Yes No

If yes, do you require an adult's assistance administering your medication? _____

DELEGATE PROFILE

This information will be used to match you with your host family. This form will then be given to your host family. Therefore please write detailed responses. (*Use additional sheet of paper if needed.*)

Food likes/dislikes (Host families have asked us to provide specifics regarding food tastes.).

Are you particular about what foods you eat? Yes Somewhat No

What non-dessert foods do you **dislike** and prefer not to eat? Beef Chicken Pork
Vegetables Cooked fish Raw fish Egg Dairy products Beans
Shellfish

Specific foods: _____

Any foods you absolutely will not eat? Specific foods: _____

What non-dessert foods do you like? Beef Chicken Pork Vegetables
Cooked fish Raw fish Egg Dairy products Beans Shellfish

Do you normally eat breakfast? Yes No

To what extent do you agree with the following statements (circle one):

I look forward to experiencing an entirely authentic Japanese breakfast.

Strongly Agree Agree Somewhat Agree

I would be comforted to have some familiar American foods along with Japanese foods at breakfast

Other:

Have you studied Japanese? Yes No If yes, for how long?

What interests you about Japanese culture?

Language People History Religion Arts/Crafts Karaoke
Martial Arts Architecture Anime/Manga Fashion Food Other_____

Please elaborate on your interests:

Please write a message to your host family:

DELEGATE PROFILE

This information will be used to match you with your host family. This form will then be given to your host family. Therefore please write detailed responses.

PLEASE ATTACH A RECENT PHOTO OF YOURSELF AND A PHOTO WITH FAMILY/FRIENDS. These photos will be given to your host family. Important note: Please write the name(s) of people pictured, in order left to right, on the back of both photos AND on this page.

One recent photo of yourself

Your Name:

Photo description (Below):

One photo with your family, friends, pets, etc.

RECOMMENDATION FORM



To whom it may concern:

This is an evaluation form for (student's name) _____, who is applying for the Battle Creek Takasaki Student Ambassador Exchange Program sponsored by the Battle Creek International Relations Committee. The exchange involves a 10-day stay in Japan followed by 10 days of hosting a Japanese teenager. When completing this form, **please remember the young person you are evaluating is asking to represent our city in Japan.** The ability to be a good representative often relies on a student's ability to compromise, to accept the decisions of a group and to be respectful in situations that contradict American culture. Please keep in mind that the committee is interested in more than whether the student demonstrates leadership or assertiveness. We also ask you to speak to the student's ability to be part of a team and to accept group decisions or adult authority, even if they disagree. It would also be helpful to know how the student responds to stress and how accepting they are of other young people who may have different likes and dislikes.

The selection committee is very dependent on your willingness to be straightforward with your opinions. The strength of the student's application and interview will also be important. Please place your recommendation in a sealed envelope and return to the student, who will submit three recommendations along with their application. **Thank you for your time.**

YOUR NAME _____ RELATIONSHIP TO STUDENT: _____

HOW MAY WE CONTACT YOU?

PHONE _____ EMAIL _____

PLEASE CIRCLE the word that best represents your opinion.

The student is flexible and tries to adjust his/her expectations and behavior as the situation warrants.

never sometimes often almost always always not sure

The student is considerate of others, is respectful of adults and peers, and displays general good manners.

never sometimes often almost always always not sure

The student seems to have "intellectual curiosity," exhibiting an eagerness to learn about new people and places.

never sometimes often almost always always not sure

The student is concerned about others and sensitive to different communication styles.

never sometimes often almost always always not sure

The student is able to reach out to peers who may have different interests, likes or dislikes.

never sometimes often almost always always not sure

Please complete reverse side.

The following questions will play an important role in the selection process. Please use additional paper if necessary. These recommendations will remain confidential and will not be shared with students or their parents.

Would you consider taking this student with you on a family vacation? Why or why not?

Please add any further information about this student that you think will be helpful to the committee.

PLEASE share with us. What, if any, are your reservations in recommending this student to the exchange program?

THIS EVALUATION SHOULD BE PLACED IN AN ENVELOPE AND SEALED BEFORE RETURNING IT TO THE STUDENT.

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